

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /016 R

66617

DRAFTED BY: S/S-O:JWOLF

APPROVED BY: S/S-O:DMACK

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R 220049Z AUG 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T STATE 199865

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT SOFIA 1767 SENT SECSTATE DATED AUG 21.

QUOTE

S E C R E T SOFIA 1767

EXDIS

FOR DEPUTY ASST SEC ARMITAGE, EUR, FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XH

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EFFECT OF SHARING VOA/RADIO FREE EUROPE FACILITIES

REF: STATE 195846

1. SINCE GIVING MY VIEWS LAST DECEMBER I HAVE HAD OCCASION
TO THINK FURTHER ABOUT RFE BULGARIAN BROADCASTS, TO VISIT
THEIR OFFICES IN MUNICH, AND THUS TO REFINE SOMEWHAT MY

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VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT. I THINK, BASICALLY, THAT VOA AS THE

OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE US GOVERNMENT IS A MORE IMPORTANT POLICY INSTRUMENT FOR US HERE AT THIS TIME THAN RFE; BUT I ALSO STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT DISBANDMENT OF THE RFE STAFF IN MUNICH WOULD DEPRIVE US OF A POTENTIALLY VERY IMPORTANT DIPLOMATIC (AND PERHAPS EVEN MILITARY) INSTRUMENT AT SOME FUTURE TIME.

2. THEREFORE, AS FAR AS BULGARIA IS CONCERNED, WE SHOULD (A) DO NOTHING TO JEOPARDIZE RECEPTION HERE OF VOA; (B) SACRIFICE TEMPORARILY IF NECESSARY THE AUDIBILITY OF RFE; BUT (C) BY ALL MEANS KEEP ALIVE OUR ASSETS IN RFE BECAUSE WE MAY NEED THEM IN CERTAIN FUTURE CONTINGENCIES -- AND IF THE RFE BULGARIAN BROADCASTS WILL BE BETTER AUDIBLE HERE AGAIN IN 18 MONTHS, SO MUCH THE BETTER. IN OTHER WORDS, I COME DOWN VERY HARD IN FAVOR OF ALTERNATIVE A IN PARA 4 OF YOUR TEL. BALANCE THIS MESSAGE DEALS WITH DISADVANTAGES OF THE OTHER ALTERNATIVES AND ATTEMPTS TO ANSWER YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS.

3. SHARING OF FACILITIES IN ANY OF THE SEVERAL FORMS PROPOSED WOULD PROVIDE PRETEXT FOR GOB CLAIM THAT PREVIOUS AMERICAN STATEMENTS, MADE IN CONNECTION WITH EFFORTS TO END JAMMING OF VOA, THAT RFE AND VOA OPERATIONS ARE COMPLETELY SEPARATE, WERE FALSE AND DISINGENUOUS. CHARGE MIGHT EVEN BE MADE OF OFFICIAL AMERICAN DECEPTION. GOB HAS CONDUCTED CONTINUOUS PUBLIC CAMPAIGN AGAINST RFE AS BEING CONTROLLED BY USG AND MORE SPECIFICALLY BY CIA. TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF TIE-IN WITH VOA WOULD THUS INEVITABLY TAR VOA. NEITHER BROADCAST FACILITY WOULD PROFIT FROM ASSOCIATION: VOA'S CREDIBILITY AS NON-POLEMICAL, OFFICIAL INFORMATION SERVICE WOULD BE DAMAGED AND ITS STATUS HERE COMPROMISED AND PERHAPS JEOPARDIZED, WHILE RFE WOULD LOSE STILL FURTHER WHATEVER CREDIBILITY IT MAY HAVE AS INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION. ON TECHNICAL SIDE, ANY SHARING ARRANGEMENT THAT CAUSED DETERIORATION IN VOA'S SIGNAL TO BULGARIA WOULD SERIOUSLY AFFECT VOA'S ABILITY TO TELL AMERICA'S STORY TO BULGARIANS. EVEN NOW THE VOA SIGNAL HERE IS ONLY BARELY SATISFACTORY.

4. ON OTHER HAND REDUCED RFE EFFECTIVENESS WHILE AWAITING CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES WOULD HAVE
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LITTLE IF ANY DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON IMMEDIATE US INTERESTS IN BULGARIA. RFE IS JAMMED AND ALTHOUGH RECENT EMBASSY MONITORING INDICATES IT IS FREQUENTLY AUDIBLE DESPITE JAMMING, WHETHER IT REACHES AN AUDIENCE OF ANY SIZE IS UNKNOWN. (THE RFE ESTIMATES BASED ON LIMITED SAMPLING OF BULGARIAN TRAVELERS MUST BE TREATED WITH UTMOST CAUTION.) WHILE WE SHOULD BY NO MEANS GIVE UP RFE, THE TEMPORARY LESSENING OF ITS AUDIBILITY IN

BULGARIA WOULD EVEN YIELD TEMPORARY DIPLOMATIC BENEFITS WHICH, WHILE NOT SOUGHT BY US, COULD BE PUT TO ADVANTAGE.

5. SPECIFIC ANSWERS TO QUESTION POSED PARA 4 REFTEL ARE:

A. IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT IF JAMMING AGAINST VOA WOULD BE RENEWED, BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY AT PRESENT. HOWEVER, USE OF SAME FACILITIES AND SAME FREQUENCIES, EVEN IF NOT BACK TO BACK, WOULD OFFER A CONVENIENT PRETEXT FOR OCCASIONAL DELIBERATE OR "INADVERTENT" JAMMING OF VOA.

B. THERE MIGHT WELL BE A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST VOA WHICH SO FAR HAS LARGELY ESCAPED THE VENOM DIRECTED AT RFE.

C. THERE COULD BE A SIGNIFICANTLY ADVERSE EFFECT ON BILATERAL RELATIONS (SEE ABOVE).

D. BULGARIA WOULD PUT PRESSURE ON THIRD COUNTRIES, MOST NOTABLY GREECE, DAMAGING TO VOA. FOR EARLIER ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE EFFECT SEE ATHENS 1644. BULGARIA WOULD OF COURSE JOIN IN ANY JOINT SOVIET OR BLOC PROPAGANDA AND/OR DIPLOMATIC COUNTER-EFFORT.

6. DEPT PASS INFO BUCHAREST, BUDAPEST, PRAGUE, WARSAW, MUNICH AND MOSCOW. HERZ UNQUOTE MAW

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONTINGENCY PLANNING, RADIO BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE199865
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: O:JWOLF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750290-0718
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750826/aaaaawnx.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 STATE 195846
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <24 SEP 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE EFFECT OF SHARING VOA/RADIO FREE EUROPE FACILITIES
TAGS: PFOR, XH, US, VOA, RFE
To: BUCHAREST MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006